

CHAPTER 17

WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES

SECOND COMING

At our Lord's first coming the "Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He was born of a virgin, bore the limitations of our humanity, and died on the cross in order to take away the sins of the world. But He triumphed over death and was exalted to the Father's right hand on high, and now, three hundred and eighteen times in the New Testament, we are told that this same Jesus is to return to the earth again. At His first coming He died to make possible a new world order; at His second coming He will establish it on the earth.

He appeared once as Sin-bearer, He now appears in the "presence of God" as intercessor, and He will appear a second time "without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:24-28).

Light in the Old Testament

The Old Testament bears witness to the coming One—as the suffering Savior and as the coming King. The whole content of Old Testament prophecy is summed up in 1 Peter 1:10-11, "concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them."

Isaiah spoke of Him as world ruler, as the hope of the political world: "The government shall be upon his shoulder:... of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom" (Isa. 9:6-7). According to the Psalmist "he shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Ps. 72:8).

Balaam, too, had a vision of the universal sway of Christ's scepter. He said: "There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a Scepter

shall rise out of Israel, . . . Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion" (Num. 24:17, 19). Christ is yet to occupy the "throne of David"—a literal, earthly throne, the government seat of which will be Jerusalem. David's seed "shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me" (Ps. 89:36), is the word of the Lord, the answer to which is Christ (2 Sam. 7:11; Ps. 132:11).

Before Christ sits upon the throne of David the world will be shaken (Heb. 12:26-27). The earth will be convulsed by the horrors of Armageddon, the renowned victor of which will be Christ Himself. This, too, is clearly revealed in the Old Testament. Turn to Isaiah 63, where He is seen coming with "dyed garments" and with "garments like him that treadeth in the winefat." This is a reference to the "day of vengeance." In the 26th of Isaiah it is clearly stated that the "Lord cometh. . . to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity" (v. 21). Christ is a man of war; He will go to battle when He returns. "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; ... and his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives" (Zech. 14:2-4).

He will return as the righteous Judge (Ps. 96:13). He will then judge Israel (Jer. 30:7) and rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David. Then and then only will we see amicable international relationships, a happy and contented society, and a warless world (Isa. 2:4).

The New Testament Promise

The absolute certainty of the literal, visible and personal return of Christ is settled in the New Testament by the peerless authority of Christ Himself. This He revealed in the parables of the pounds (Luke 19), the talents, and the virgins (Matt. 25). On the eve of His departure He declared: "If I go. . . I will come again" (John 14:3, 28). He said the tribes of the earth would "see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory," and, "When ye think not the Son of man cometh" (Matt. 24:30, 44).

The assurance given by the angels to the apostles at the ascension (Acts 1:11), is not only the outstanding scriptural promise of Christ's second coming, but defines the manner of His return: the "same Jesus" will so come in "like manner" as He departed. All the epistles,

with the exception of Philemon and third John, contain glowing promises of the second advent, couched in the most unmistakable terms.

The great prophetic book of the New Testament, Revelation, shows us how the glorified Christ will overthrow evil, receive unto Himself His bride, and return in triumph to reign on the earth for a thousand years.

These promises are not only given to stimulate our faith or to assure us that God will eventually take wicked men and evil spirits in hand, but chiefly that we may be warned, in order that we may be prepared and, therefore, watching and witnessing until He comes.

He will come unexpectedly—when “ye think not”; suddenly—as “a snare”; insuperably—in “flaming fire” to judge His enemies; secretly—for His Bride. He will come to bestow rewards—“my reward is with me.” In Matthew 25 He is seen as a Bridegroom at the wedding (parable of the virgins), as a Master to reward His servants (parable of the pounds), as a King to judge (parable of the sheep and goats).

Order of Events

There will be at least five outstanding world conditions or events associated with our Lord’s second advent: **degeneration, restoration, glorification, tribulation and revelation.**

First, there will be **degeneration**. In the book of Jude the tide of evil is seen surging like the “raging waves of the sea.” Jude, quoting Enoch’s prophecy, says Christ will come to judge the ungodly “for all their ungodly deeds” (v. 15). He says there shall “be mockers in the last time” (v. 18; 2 Peter 3:3). In this little book of Jude twenty-six charges of appalling godlessness are presented as to why Christ must of necessity come in judgment.

At the time of our Lord’s return, wickedness will be rampant; evil “men and seducers shall wax worse and worse,” and this is in harmony with the various prophetic statements regarding the “last days.” According to our Lord’s reference to the day of Noah and Lot, the masses will become utterly materialistic; they will degenerate

to the low level of the antediluvian standard when “the thoughts of men’s hearts were only evil continually.” The day of the Lord will not take place until there first come a “falling away” (2 Thess. 2:3).

Prior to the coming of Christ, God will deal with Israel in **restoration**. This restoration will be double. First there will be a national restoration to the land of Israel. “He that scattered Israel will gather him.” The Jews will return at first in dribbles, later in great masses, their “gold and silver with them.” Later, there will be a spiritual restoration. “There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer (Christ), and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” God will say, “It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God” (Zech. 13:9).

At the coming of Christ the church will experience its **glorification**. The saints who are alive and remain will be “changed in the twinkling of an eye;” they will be “caught up” to meet the Lord, and this will be associated with the “first resurrection.” The “dead in Christ” will rise first and the living saints will ascend with them to meet the Lord. Then rewards will be distributed and they shall return with their glorified Savior to reign on the earth.

Christ’s coming will be a glad day, but it will also be a sad day, for between the rapture and the revelation there will be the period of the Gentile **tribulation**. God will then punish the nations for their wickedness. The gospel of God’s grace will then have been rejected, the day of grace will then have ceased, and the “whirlwind of the Lord” will descend upon the “head of the wicked” (Jer. 30:23).

The climax of the tribulation will be reached in Armageddon. This death-struggle of the nations will necessitate the coming of Christ who will intervene for the elect’s sake. This will be the **revelation**—the appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with all the saints and angels. We read, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days. . . shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 24:29-30). The rapture will precede the revelation. At the rapture the saints will go to be with Christ; at the revelation they will come with Him. Between

the rapture and the revelation will be the great tribulation. At His coming Christ will overthrow tyranny, establish His kingdom of peace and reign a thousand years.

Signs That His Coming Is Imminent

The exact day and hour of Christ's return is not disclosed. If it was there would be no necessity to "watch" for it. However, God's people are the children of light, they are not in "darkness, that that day should overtake" them as a thief (1 Thess. 5:4). It is said the "wicked shall do wickedly" but the "wise shall understand" (Dan. 12:10).

Our Lord's sign. In the Mount Olivet discourse (Matt. 24-25), our Lord gave a number of signs as infallible indications of the imminence of His return. First, He gave the parable of the "fig tree." When we see it "shoot forth" then we are to know that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. The "fig tree" of course, is Israel that for centuries has been withered. Now it is reviving. After age-long persecution the Jews are attaining national cohesion, their national ideals are being revived, and this announces the imminence of Christ's appearing.

Christ also referred to the moral conditions that would exist at the time of His appearing when He said, "As it was in the days of Noah." He referred to political upheaval, "wars and rumors of wars," kingdom rising against kingdom. He said there would be convulsions in nature— earthquakes, famines, pestilences. He assured us that the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom in all lands would be an evidence of the end of the present age.

Daniel's sign. Daniel gave us a sign of the "time of the end." He said, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased" (12:4). We are told that this does not refer to the knowledge of God and His Word, but to scientific and mechanical knowledge, the advancement of which is conspicuously in evidence now. There is abundance of gadding about, running "to and fro," and if this portends the age-end, we may conjecture safely that the time is near.

Nahum's sign. Nahum gave us the sign that the "chariots shall be

with flaming torches in the day of his preparation," and again, the "chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings" (2:3-4). The modern war tank and automobile are comparable to the ancient chariot. This has a conspicuous present-day fulfillment.

St. Paul's sign. St. Paul reminded us that the day of the Lord would be preceded by a "falling away" and the manifestation of the "man of sin" (2 Thess. 2:3). This is confirmed by numerous other Pauline predictions. Whatever the future holds in store, one does not need prophetic vision to see that there is a "falling away" now all around us.

Peter's sign. Peter tells of "scoffers" who are to come, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming?" (2 Pet. 3:4). There will be those seeking to bring the doctrine of Christ's second coming into disrepute by contempt and ridicule. But this will simply serve as a sign to the people of God that their Lord's coming is very near.

James' sign. James, too, gave us a sign much in evidence now (5:1-8). The rich are to hoard great wealth; they are to oppress and rob the poor of their just wages; they are to condemn and kill the just. This, says the apostle, is associated with the "coming of the Lord." He gave the lesson of the farmer waiting for the "precious fruit of the earth," and added: "Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The Pre-millennial Coming

In general there are two ideas regarding Christ's second coming. Those who hold the post-millennial view believe that Christ will come after the millennium, that by the preaching of the gospel the millions of the world will be converted. The pre-millennial view holds that there can be no millennium without Christ, that the world, instead of being converted when He comes, will be in the grip of the Antichrist. If He is to come after the thousand years of peace, we certainly do not need to look for Him now, unless it be in a spiritual sense through the Holy Spirit. If He is to return to put an end to wickedness and to establish His earthly kingdom, then we should be

looking for Him to come at any moment.

Why should Christ come to judge the nations, as the Bible says, if the world is to be converted at (or before) His coming? Why should all The kindreds of The earth wail because of Him at His coming if they are converted?

When our Lord returns there will be a declension of faith, for He said of Himself: “When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8). Faith is to give place to fable. Spiritualism will be flourishing. This shows that Christ’s coming will be pre-millennial.

The Bible plainly says there will be no ending of war till Christ comes. It teaches that Christ’s coming will destroy The Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8). False prophets, false Christs, spiritualism and demon power manifesting itself in organized warfare will be the evidence of our Lord’s return. He will come to put an end to war (Isa. 2:4); to save Israel (Rom. 11:26), to judge the nations (Matt. 25:31-36), and to sit on the throne of David at Jerusalem.

Purpose of His Coming

Almost everything that relates to the amelioration of human conditions and the renewing of creation is involved in the return of Christ. The following scripture references reveal a **seven-fold purpose** why Christ must come.

1. *To complete the salvation of the saints.* Peter speaks of a salvation yet in the future. He says we are “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5). In Hebrews 9:28 it is said, “Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Our present salvation from human guilt and original depravity is but a foretaste—a foreshadowing of the fullness to come: a transformed, resurrected and glorified body. With the ultimate glorification of man will come a corresponding Edenic renewal of all creation that was made “subject to vanity” for man’s sake at the beginning (Rom. 8:19-24).

2. *To be glorified in His saints.* Christ’s coming is the “blessed

hope,” the crowning joy of the saints. He will come to be “glorified in his saints.” The present is the day of testing and trial, then will come the day of reward and blessing. Whatever His glory will be in that day, His saints will share it. He will be in their midst; glorified, and when he shall appear we “shall be like him” (John 3:2).

3. *To be admired by the believers.* When Christ comes He will be greatly loved, highly extolled and admired above all. What divinity and holiness will radiate from His person! What power there will be in His word! His victory over sin and Satan, the glorification of the redeemed church, the order, justice and peace of His reign, will stimulate the gratitude and admiration of the saints. Therefore when He returns in power and great glory He will be “admired in all them that believe” (2 Thess. 1:10).

4. *To reveal the hidden things of darkness.* In this world of hypocrisy it is often impossible to attain true justice. In our sphere of human limitation we are not to judge prematurely, for now “truth is on the scaffold,” but we are to wait till Christ comes when He will “bring to light the hidden things of darkness” (1 Cor. 4:5).

The “hidden things of darkness” which are to be uncovered and brought to judgment embrace the whole scope of unholy, Satanic intrigue against God and against man. We are now the “pilgrims of the night,” but the dawn of day is coming! When Christ comes it will be in judgment; it will be to “reap the earth,” and then, as He once said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13).

5. *To judge.* When Christ shall come in His glory, He will judge the living nations, for, “before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them” (Matt. 25:31-46). The nations are compared to sheep and goats, and Christ, who is represented in simile as the great Shepherd, is seen dividing them “one from another,” the goats being placed on the left hand and the sheep on the right. The righteous will be invited to “inherit the kingdom” then being established, while the wicked will be put away into “everlasting punishment.”

6. *To reign.* When Jesus returns He will reign literally and

visibly on the earth. He will have the “uttermost parts of the earth” for His possession (Ps. 2:8). He will reign for a thousand years (Rev. 20).

7. *To banish His enemies.* Jesus must reign till He “hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). Satan the seducer, the destroyer, has blackened the stream of human happiness for six thousand years, but at Christ’s coming a heaven-commissioned angel will bind him with chains and he will be incarcerated for a thousand years. The devil’s tool, The Antichrist, who will oppose and challenge Christ at His coming, will also be dealt with; he will be destroyed “with the brightness of his coming.”

The “last enemy that shall be destroyed is death” (1 Cor. 15:26). Grim death shot his arrow at Christ on the cross but it proved to be a boomerang. Even death was conquered on the cross. “Death is swallowed up in victory.” A time is coming, therefore, when death itself will be destroyed. Death and hell are to be cast into the lake of fire. “This is the second death” (Rev. 20:14).

“Be Ye Also Ready”

It is important to have a scriptural understanding of this, the world’s greatest event. It is important to teach it, to be watching for it and witnessing to it, but the paramount and dominating concern for each and all is the personal preparation for it. Christ’s coming calls for only one thing—the wedding garment of holiness. That is the readiness that is indispensable. It is the heart preparation, the passion that cries out: “Come, Lord Jesus.” It is a preparation that gives one “boldness in the day of judgment,” for it is a preparation of “perfect love” that “casteth out fear.” It is an intensity for Jesus Christ through the “love of The Spirit” that truly enables one to “love his appearing.” It is sanctification of The heart; it is that holiness “without which no man shall see the Lord.” It is the fine linen, the righteousness of the saints, the wedding garment of purity, The sanctification by which we are joined to Christ, by which the bride makes herself ready.

The character and conduct of present world conditions, the ominous signs that portend the imminence of His return, are calling

with unanimous voice, in the words of the Savior: “Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the

SON OF MAN COMETH.”